This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

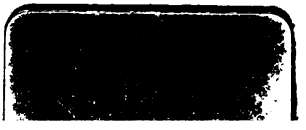
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`



MARY ASTON

OR

THE EVENTS OF A YEAR.

"A moral tale, tho' gay."

LONDON:
SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.

1845.

D. A. DOUDNEY, 1, LONG LANE :

TO LA SIGNORA POLKA.

MY DEAR YOUNG LADY,—

IT is an old saying that "we seldom improve on acquaintance;"—not so with you; although *our* acquaintance began with only the commencement of the past year, our meeting has been ever to me the source of the warmest welcome and the greatest pleasure; and let me add, though hailing your presence amidst the young and gay as often as the most favoured of my fellow mortals, still, the thought has always been, when absent from you, that our meetings are "like angels' visits, few and far between."

To you, the partner of many a happy evening, I dedicate these pages, and beg you to believe me, the humblest of your slaves

THE WANDERER.

MARY ASTON;

OR,

THE EVENTS OF A YEAR.

"A moral tale, tho' gay."

CHAPTER I.

"A HAPPY new year, and may God bless you, my dearest Mary," was the affectionate and heart-felt welcome of Mr. Aston to his only child, as she entered the breakfast-room on the morning of the first of January, 1844. Warmly and gratefully she returned the kiss, that pledge of parental love and parental care, but still a regret, as it ever must be here below, mingled with her cup of happiness and hope—a wish that one other was by her side, to hail the dawn

of the new-born year—one who had fondly looked forward to her entrance into the world pure and unsullied from her childhood's home—the pride of her early married life, and the solace of her declining years—her mother. She, alas! was numbered with the dead; a short two years since, and all was hope, and joy, and love at Waddesdon, but an illness, commencing with a cold caught in an unlooked-for exposure to a winter's storm, while paying a visit of charity in her parish, proved fatal in the end, and thus the tearful eye, with which the new year was ushered in both by father and child.

Mrs. Aston had been indeed, a pattern to her sex—the poor man's truest friend—his consoler in affliction—his adviser at all seasons: by her had the Sunday school been established, consisting of fifty boys and fifty girls, who were all supplied with new clothing every year at Christmas time; and then on that great festival of our church, it was a most pleasing sight to see their neat and tidy little figures clad in their new

dresses, trooping through the churchyard, to their allotted station in the gallery, 'neath which, alas! their early friend and benefactress was laid low; but many of them still remembered the friendly greeting and encouraging looks with which she ever met them; not one but felt a pleasure in telling to her all their little sorrows; sure of counsel and assistance; and if they had committed any fault, which they knew must call for more than common reproof, their little hearts told them it was their duty to tell all to so just and kind a friend, and it was straightway told.

Almost all of us, even the most careless, at the opening of a new year, give it, may be, only a *hurried* glance o'er the scenes of our former life, but still, *some* thought is given to days never to return, even amongst those who at other seasons have little thought beyond the passing hour; then how acute the feeling—how saddening the thought in the present case, when she who is absent now, as a mother, wife, and friend, was respected and beloved by everybody.

The house and manor of Waddesdon came into the possession of Mr. Aston on the death of his uncle, about three years prior to his marriage; the house itself was of no great size; three or four rooms had been added by the present owner, and a conservatory erected on the southern front, which led from the drawing-room to the pleasure-ground beyond, in the midst of which a fountain played, surrounded, in the summer season, by many a garden flower, planted in beds of divers fantastic shapes; thither on a calm still evening, made doubly pleasant by the somewhat oppressive heat of the noonday sun, would Mary Aston and her mother resort; and then, when the nightingale paid his tribute to the evening hour in the grove hard by, they talked perchance, of some events of the past day, and formed some happy plan for the morrow.

Mrs. Aston, while listening to the prattle of her child, unmarked it may be, offered up a silent prayer of thanks and praise to the Giver of all good; and Mary, as yet too young to

know affliction, saw nothing to mar the happiness of the days to come.

Seated around the breakfast-table, were Sir Edward and Lady Mordaunt, their two daughters, and a son, an officer in the Coldstream Guards; Lady Mordaunt was a sister of our host's, and resided at Crowther Park, some fifteen miles away, thus Mary and her cousins were often in each other's society; *they* had made their début in the great world, the eldest two years since, and her sister only the last season, while Mary was yet in her noviciate, but was to "come out" that year. "Well, Mordaunt," said Mr. Aston, "are you for the field to-day? Burton tells me, that the home covers want thinning, so you and I, accompanied by our young hero there, will, if you please, sally forth after breakfast, the exercise will put you in proper trim for your parliamentary campaign, and do us both good." "Indeed," answered Sir Edward, "having had a holiday until Easter last year, I must be in attendance early next

month; besides, we saw no birds on the wing in our Italian tour last winter, which makes me doubly anxious for a good day's sport, though I am hardly the shot I used to be;" "and I," chimed in the guardsman, "have seen for the last two months nothing but Piccadilly sparrows, so am ready for the field at a moment's notice." Away they went.

Mary and her cousins, after some little talk with the housekeeper about winter fuel for the poor, and other parish matters, put on their bonnets, and hurried away to the vicarage, where the good old clergyman, Mr. Bennett, had promised to show them some curious fossils he had lately collected; thus passed the morning; then the Italian sketches were criticised, and the late tour again discussed: at half-past six o'clock dinner was announced; and then, when the dessert was placed upon the table, and they clustered round their peaceful hearth, the wood fire crackling and sending up a cheerful blaze, Sir Edward proposed our heroine's health,

in which we trust (as there is a lady in the case), our readers will cordially join.

It has been said, that there is something in the misfortunes of even our best friends, not altogether displeasing to us—a letter was handed to Mr. Maberley as he sat at breakfast with his wife on the morning of the twenty-fifth of January, it was from the old and faithful servant of Mr. Bailey, a fox-hunting 'squire in the neighbouring county of Oxfordshire, and began, by stating that his master had had a severe fall, while hunting the previous day on his horse Roan Rupert. Mr. Maberley reading aloud, had proceeded thus far, when he pushed back his chair from the table, and laying both hands on the letter, exclaimed, "told him how it would be—would put that confounded martingale on, which worried and fretted the beast—gave him warning—wouldn't take my advice—serve him right." "My dear," said Mrs. Maberley, "never mind how he might have avoided the accident, but do, for God's sake, finish the

letter." It went on to say, that he had been immediately taken home, and Dr. Smith sent for, who, luckily, being disengaged, was soon on the spot; three ribs were found to be broken, and there was great difficulty in breathing, owing to the fractured bones pressing against the lungs, but the doctor did not apprehend any other internal injury; the great object at present was to keep down the fever attendant on such a serious accident. "Poor, poor fellow!" cried the rough but good-hearted 'squire, as he hurriedly rose up to ring the bell for his horse, for the purpose of proceeding to the bed-side of his sick friend, "we have had many a hard run together; we have known each other for many a long day, and is it come to this? but hang it," continued he, as he brushed away an unusual moisture from his eyelids, "ye shan't yet awhile run to earth, we'll have ye in the saddle again before the season's out. Charley, too, will be right sorry to hear this bad news; but he will be here again in a short time, so if you write to-day, my dear, do not say anything about it."

"My last letter was written to him yesterday," answered his wife, "and I am not sure that he will even receive that, as he was to be en route from the north about this time." "Well, that's all right," said the 'squire, and in a few minutes he was mounted and away.

And where was "Charley," of whom mention has just been made? At this moment he was standing with his back to the fire, in a first-floor lodging in Bury-street, St. James's, contemplating some bread and butter and a couple of muffins perched up on the slop-basin, while the tea-kettle immediately behind him seemed to be singing a revéille to some one in the adjoining room, who, while dressing, kept up a running conversation with his more punctual friend, interrupted every now and then by humming, "'tis a way we have in the army." "I doubt that much, my good fellow," said Charles, at one of these breaks, "for you must be on parade as the clock strikes the appointed hour, and here the breakfast has been on the table these ten minutes,

and"—"I am down upon you, as the avalanche said to the cottage," shouted Frank Stirling, as he came into the room with a hop, skip, and jump, minus his coat, and only one boot on. "Come, better late than never, but why the devil did you not set-to before, I sang out fifty times to that effect from the other room; but you're a trump, Charley, for coming out of your way for a couple of days, for the purpose of keeping me company, and begin, by getting a cold breakfast for your pains." Scarcely, however had they commenced operations, when the landlady suddenly opened the door, begging pardon for coming in so "bouncible," and exclaimed that "Mr. Coatee was on the stairs, that he had called once before that morning, as he particularly wished to see Mr. Stirling, and now would not be denied. "He swears that he heard your voice, Sir, as I opened the street-door, so what could I do?" "Confound the fellow," cried Frank, "but shew him in, he is welcome to some of this cold muffin, at all

events." "I am much obliged to you," said Mr. Coatee, who had heard this last remark, and now entered the room, "but people who have to earn their daily bread, breakfast somewhat earlier than this hour. I have called to remind you, that your debt to me of two years standing is yet unpaid, and I am in want of money; besides, you promised to settle my account at the beginning of this month." "True, true," interrupted Master Frank, "I have come to town on purpose, but have first to pay a visit to my lawyer, in Castle-street, and then I hope to pay you immediately."

"Ah! I know whom you mean, Mr. Rowton, your late father's man of business; I too, *hope* Sir, that you will be successful in raising funds; when shall I call again?" "Oh, to-morrow, but you did not think I had forgotten you, Coatee." "How could I," continued he, as he turned towards Charles Maberley with a light laugh, "when the very last waistcoat the fellow made me, was sprinkled all over with forget-me-

nots, with buttons intended to represent the same flower in full bloom." "You chose it yourself, Sir, and I shall be glad if it always reminds you of me, so wish you a good morning."

Exit Mr. Coatee, not at all sure of payment on the following day.

Frank Stirling was an orphan; his father, a younger brother, married early in life, one endowed with as little of this world's wealth as himself. She had died in giving birth to this her first-born son, whose surviving parent, after losing upwards of half his small fortune at the gaming-table, died some four years since, just a year subsequent to obtaining a commission for his son in the —— regiment of the line; with such an example, it is not altogether to be wondered at, that Frank exceeded his small income of two hundred and fifty pounds a-year, independent of his pay, a sum quite sufficient for all ordinary expenses, but not enough for extravagance of any sort. So here we find him

on the eve of seeking counsel and assistance from one with whom he had no connexion or acquaintance beyond a call or two when accompanied by his deceased parent, himself in search of funds.

"You will come with me, Charley, won't you," said his friend, as he rose from the breakfast-table, "old Rowton has a daughter grown up by this time, and doubtless, pretty. I cannot exactly speak from my own observation, remembering only, when calling there once with my poor father, we saw on our entrance a pair of legs encased in white trowsers, with many a tuck allowing for growth, hurrying up the stairs, two steps at a time; a goodly array of flaxen coloured ringlets fell over her countenance, as she bobbed her head for a moment at the turning on the stairs to reconnoitre us, and that was all, for I have not seen her since. You must not make love on your own account, but tell her as often as you will, what an agreeable well-disposed young man *I* am; that I am come to pay a visit

to her papa, on my way through town, merely for old acquaintance-sake; and other equally true speeches ad libitum, for I have very serious and praiseworthy intentions of proposing for her in all due form, if her flaxen hair has not turned red, and she has left off wearing trowsers. Au reste, I am sure she must have or will have lots of tin, so hold forth about the beauty of the country—green leaves and buttercups—peaches and pomegranates—nightingales and the moon; and wind up by hinting, that I am of a domestic turn of mind, and long to turn my sword into a ploughshare. Now do this like a good fellow, and—I'll ask you to the wedding."

"A hopeful plan, truly," answered his friend: "we'll suppose all these whispered praises of you poured into the ear of the fair lady of Castle-street, by your very humble servant—that she believes you the best and steadiest of men, and anxious beyond measure to marry and settle in the country, how will you succeed with her sire?"

"Begin by borrowing money of him to-day,

and propose for his daughter the next—'a new way to pay old debts,' in which farce the principal performer is Mr. Frank Stirling. Ah, you may laugh, Charley, but odder things than this have happened; 'necessity is the mother of invention,' you know, but allons, it is time we were on the move, so you will not forget to mention, apropos of nothing at all, that there is a railway in these enlightened times to Gretna-green."

Old Rowton was at home, and seemed at once to divine the business which led Frank thither, but shook him kindly by the hand, and in the end, promised to see what could be done, first, however, making him promise, not only to live within his income for the future, but at once to devote one hundred pounds each year to the payment of his old debts, thus, at the end of three years, he would be again perfectly free. "You were always an extravagant dog," said the kind-hearted old man. "I remember hearing, that when your grandmother on one of the

black Mondays, just before your starting for school, told you to go to Gunter's, and eat as much as you liked, you certainly ate as much as you could, for four-and-twenty shillings and sixpence was put down to your grandmother's account, which caused the worthy lady to write you a long letter about indigestion and its consequences."

"Well, Sir," at length, said Frank, "I am very much obliged to you, but as I was talking over old times with my friend, on our way hither, he asked me if you had any family, this put me in mind, that some years since, I caught a glimpse of your daughter on the staircase, so, before saying good bye, let me hope she is well."

"She is quite well, thank you," responded Mr. Rowton, with a slight smile, "and is at this moment with her aunt at Camberwell, who is somewhat of an invalid."

"I say, Charley," said his companion, as they regained the street, "Camberwell would not sound well in print; par exemple—'This morn-

ing at a very early hour, Miss R. eloped from the residence of her maternal aunt, Mrs. Higginbottom, of Camberwell, with Mr. F. S.; the happy pair, on the wings of love, are supposed to have proceeded to the railway terminus in a hack-cab.' That would be the natural conclusion of a Camberwell elopement; and then perhaps would come a postscript: 'It is said that Mr. F. S. being in difficulties, could not obtain the father's consent, parchment and red tape being very inimical to ardent affections.'"

Now the reader must not suppose, that, because he has been introduced to Charles Maberley in the society of the wild and thoughtless Frank Stirling, that he has entered on the same course of extravagance and folly, with little thought beyond the present moment, and careless of the future. They had been schoolfellows together at Eton—had had the same tutor, and lived under the same roof; their out-door pursuits had been the same, so far, they were agreed.

But Frank, though naturally clever, was

always an idle boy, and thus, his lessons were imperfectly studied, and his Latin verses often written by others, or with the aid of an "old copy." Charles, on the contrary, equally quick, was apparently less gifted, but he was pretty regular, in first completing his allotted task, and then joining his friend and others in the shooting-fields, or, if the season for cricket was over, any other active amusement appropriate to the time of year. Thus, they got on very well together; Frank was often the gainer by the companionship of his more steady friend, who would now and then remind him of something left undone, or some task forgotten. Four years thus past away, Frank obtained his commission, as has been before stated, and Charles went to Oxford, where, though a little wildish and extravagant at times, but not "spending half-a-crown out of sixpence a-day," as the old song goes, like his late schoolfellow, he got on very well, and in course of time, took a very creditable degree; and at this present date had left that University about three years.

On the following evening, Frank Stirling having settled his accounts with his more pressing creditors, left town to join his regiment, then stationed at Winchester; and Charles Maberley started home, where he found his father in high spirits, being assured of the convalescence of his friend.

A few weeks passed away, when one fine morning early in the month of April, the carriage which was to convey Mr. Aston and his daughter to the railway-station at Pangbourne, which is situated about forty miles from our metropolis, on the Great Western line, drew up to the door of Waddesdon. The sun shone bright as they stepped into the carriage, though one of those showers, proverbial in that inconstant and capricious month, had fallen but an hour or two before, and the rain-drops still sparkled on the boughs of all the garden trees which were just beginning to bud and give promise of an early spring. The old housekeeper who accompanied them to the hall-door,

wished "Miss Mary," for the hundredth time, much pleasure and enjoyment in her approaching London season, and bid her be sure and not forget to wrap up well, when leaving "those hot rooms at night." Mary again promised faithfully to obey her instructions, and the carriage drove off. The journey was, in these days of locomotion, safely and expeditiously performed, and they arrived in Dover-street between three and four o'clock. Mr. Aston had rented a house for the season in that locality, mainly because the Mordaunts lived in Berkeley-square, and it was desirable that their respective dwellings should not be far apart, as much intercourse would naturally take place between them.

Jane and Eliza Mordaunt shortly made their appearance to welcome their cousin to town, and help her to arrange some little household matters, &c. &c., and then, as had been before arranged, carried her off to Berkeley-square, where Mr. Aston said he would be before the dinner-hour. Nobody was there but the family

party; the gentlemen talked politics, and the ladies chatted of what they had already been doing, and all they looked forward to during the next three months. The Polka, the all-absorbing Polka, or as some old folks called it, "the epidemic of the day," which they trusted, would at least usurp the place of the influenza, so common at that period of the year, was discussed. It had been practised by the trio in the country; the Mordaunt girls had danced it in town more than once, and declared they were sure that the galop and the waltz must succumb and bow before the shrine of this new divinity in the fashionable world.

Now let us suppose the usual routine gone through; the usual visits of old acquaintances in Dover Street, and let the curtain be drawn up in Berkeley Square about eleven o'clock on the night of the twentieth of the month. Some forty people were assembled in the drawing-room, which, uncarpeted and ready for the approaching ball, seemed well worthy the presence of La

Signora Polka. Almost all of those who had yet arrived had known their host and hostess for many years. All of them knew that a fair and new flower in the garden of beauty was that night to make her appearance on the scene of London life; so that, when our heroine entered the room on the arm of her father, each, unknown to her, made silent remarks on her face and figure, her beauty, and the grace with which she crossed the room to meet the welcome of her relations. In this they were all agreed; but it strikes us that, as yet, we have not, in any way, described Mary Aston: so let us take this opportunity previous to the ball commencing.

In form she was rather above the middle height, and, as she had hardly numbered eighteen summers, to some it gave promise of still greater charms than it yet possessed; but all the elasticity and grace of youth was there; while her dark hair simply braided, with a single jewel sparkling on her brow, and the heightened colour with which she received the

warm wishes of those near and dear to her;—in short, her simple grace at once created a feeling in her favour only strengthened and confirmed by a more intimate acquaintance.

The band were in their places, and a quadrille was played. Her cousin Edward Mordaunt claimed her hand, whispering—

"Come, Mary, you must pass the Rubicon with me, and then, when once in the open sea, will have no need of a pilot. I have secured a vis-à-vis; so let us stand up."

The quadrille over, and a waltz the order of the evening, many more arrived, and a Polka—the Redowa Polka—struck up. Then began the ball; and as our immortal bard has it, "all the world's a stage," so, let us say, what had taken place before was but the prologue to the play. Now the scene really opened, and all were anxious to perform their several parts, inspired by the most winning and exhilarating music. "All went merry as a marriage bell."

"By Jove!" said Harry Cholmondeley, who

just then entered the room, "whose is that fairy form, lately dropped from the clouds, which Mowbray is happy enough to call his own for the time? Truly, as she whisked by just now,

'She unfurl'd
The prettiest foot and ancle in the world.'

"But I must away to the lady of the mansion, and beg for an introduction."

Another half-hour, and he had engaged this "fairy form" for a quadrille.

"Well," said he, after a few common-place observations, "how do you like this first evening of your London existence? Hot-house plants, all of us. Soon we should fade away and die, if not cheered each opening year by flowers fresh and blooming from the country; but you can hardly judge yet."

Mary was somewhat surprised at the abruptness of this speech, spoken hurriedly, while the eye of the speaker wandered about as if to enumerate all those engaged in the quadrille, which

was just then commencing. She, however, merely answered that she could as yet, as he said, "be no judge of all that was passing around her."

"Are you fond of music?" continued he. "You must go and see my favourite Lablache in "Don Pasquale," which is shortly to appear; and then, if you please, the polka in the ballet afterwards, which, by the way, is as much like the polka you were dancing just now as a representation of events in this world of ours as performed at one of our theatres is like real life."

Mary was again puzzled by the volubility of her partner, who immediately added, "You are fond of riding, I hope, and have a horse at your disposal. Nothing so conducive to health and good looks. I myself take a gallop daily, or should not be fit for anything."

Supper was at this moment announced by those nearest the staircase gradually disappearing; so, the quadrille being over, Harry Cholmondely proposed a descent to the shades below. "But you have already crossed the Styx," added

he, "and do not, I trust, repent the transit. Will you witness how we fare in this happy land?"

Mary could not help laughing at this rattle, so away they went.

Now Harry Cholmondeley for many seasons had been what is sometimes called "a man about town;" knew every lady, and his face seemed at some period of the evening at least, everywhere. With high spirits and a good constitution, his careless good-humour never failed to enliven those about him; and those who knew him best declared that, when any misfortune or contretemps happened to any of his numerous acquaintances, he was ever ready to assist them to the utmost of his power, and in more than one instance had proved himself a successful mediator between angry and excited parties by his happy way of putting the matter of dispute and quarrel in its proper and true light. Curious as it may seem to some, he was looked upon as not "a marrying man." Young, good-looking, and

clever, he amused others, and was, to all appearance, happy himself the livelong day, but never hardly by a word he would afterwards wish recalled, passed in the smallest degree, the bounds of propriety and right. Thus the most anxious and watchful parent felt sure of her child not suffering from his companionship.

After supper another polka was danced, and then Mr. Aston proposed a homeward voyage, which was gladly acceded to by his daughter; as the novelty and excitement of her first ball had somewhat agitated and fatigued her. Sweet and refreshing were our heroine's slumbers. The world to her was still strewn with many a summer flower unhurt and unblighted by the winter of adversity and withering care. Little did she dream that many of those in whose society she had lately been had griefs and sorrows only they themselves were conscious of—only they themselves could feel; perchance the bright and hopeful visions of their early youth all gone—never to return. May good angels *ever* guard thy bed, Mary—and so good night!

CHAPTER II.

I AM sure if we give one impartial thought to the habits of life of our fellow countrymen, we must confess that they somewhat run into extremes, as exemplified in a town and country life. In the country we are generally methodical and regular in all our habits; get up at a certain hour, breakfast at a certain hour, sit down to luncheon whether hungry or not, and dinner on the table within five minutes of the appointed time. If the newspaper was by any mischance, not to make its appearance at the breakfast table, indigestion would be the consequence; it however does come, having been drying at the fire during prayers; its contents are discussed; the lady of the house having made tea, read her letters, and finished her breakfast, hurries away to her room, and gives audience to the house-

keeper; her daughter declares that she has two letters to write, but will take a short walk before the luncheon hour, at which sitting, the usual hour of driving is proposed, *where* the only question, to a circulating library in a town at some few miles distance, or a call on some people "who are sure to be out this fine day;" the dinner-bell rings—roast mutton and a chicken devoured with the usual good appetite, a little music, some chat and a good deal of work in the evening, eleven o' clock strikes, bed-candles are lit, the weather-glass looked at en passant, and duly thumped by the knuckle of the forefinger of the owner of the house, for the purpose of seeing whether or not it be on the ascendant, he having, previously to ringing the drawing-room bell, put the guard up before the fire; this the routine of a small family party in the country. True, there are as there always must be exceptions to this regular course of life; when a large party is staying in a house, punctuality cannot be so regarded, and this puts me in mind of two things I myself was

an eye witness to, in the summer of 183–, at the hospitable mansion of ————.

On a Sunday morning the rain set in very heavily about half-past eight o'clock, just as the good folks were thinking of getting up. Some did, in a short time, begin their toilet; others peeped out of the window and then got into bed again; so that they came down by detachments, and it was nearly one o'clock before the breakfast was over. A bright spot about that time appeared in the sky, so that if it really cleared up the carriages were ordered to be in attendance to convey them to the church, about two miles off. Down came the rain heavier than before, and at half-past three the household were assembled in the library for the purpose of hearing the prayers read; everything was arranged, the Prayer-book and Bible on the small table in front of the arm chair, and the servants in their places, when the owner of the house who meant to read the prayers happening to pass through the room, opened the Prayer-book at the morning service, and proceeded to the next room to see if all his

guests were assembled; which the governess perceiving, turned over the leaves to where the evening service commences; but on his reappearance quietly turned the leaves back again and commenced reading the morning service; accustomed to late hours, it was still morning with him. Again the following week a water party was the order of the day, and we proceeded down the river; but having started two hours later than originally intended, did not get back until half-past eight o'clock. Two of the neighbours had been asked to dine at seven o'clock; so that happening to run into the drawing-room previous to making my toilet, I discovered one, the gentleman, fast asleep in an easy chair, while his wife, though awake, was reclining at full length on the sofa, looking very lonely and unhappy; the former declared it was "too bad," and the latter that she had "very nearly been asleep," and was "very hungry." In town how *all* run into extremes; meet in the morning, perhaps, pretty regularly at the same hour, but the occupations of the rest of the day depend entirely on

chance, or are guided by the world without, what is going on abroad. And then at night! heavens and earth! our crowded rooms, our late hours fashion, the lady paramount, rules all our proceedings; the opera is sought when it is half over, and the morning light often illumines our homeward way from a ball.

All that can be said is, "Do as they do at Rome;" it is very true, however, many may wish it otherwise; the penalty must be paid, and the result of all this unnatural dissipation and late hours, uneasy slumbers and a pallid cheek, unmarked at night, but made evident by the morrow's dawn.

Mary Aston, by far too sensible a girl even to wish to see any ball or party drawing to a close, felt the truth of all this; and thus when Charles Maberley, calling one afternoon about two o'clock, found her already equipped for her ride, she seemed as fresh and blooming as he had known her in her country home. He himself had ridden to Dover-street, so he petitioned to accompany her father and herself, which was willingly acceded

to. Waddesden was only twenty miles distant from Mr. Maberley's place; Charles had more than once been staying with the Aston's, accompanied by his father and mother; and last year had been there alone for a week's shooting.

"Maberley," said Mr. Aston, when mounting his horse, "the band, I think, plays to-day in Kensington-gardens, so we can canter round the Regent's-park and be back in plenty of time to hear a Polka or two played; what say you, Mary?" said her father, smiling.

"Oh, by all means; and as we pass through Portland-place we can inquire how Sir Frederick Wilson is going on."

"You are a thoughtful girl; I am glad you reminded me of our old neighbour; but, poor fellow, I fear he will never be himself again."

Mary was mounted on her favourite horse Marmion, which had carried his mistress for the last three years; and, as is often the case with ladies' horses, was perfectly quiet under her management, though somewhat fidgetty and dis-

contented when mounted by one of the other sex. On entering the Park, they put their steeds into a canter; the light summer wind blew cool and refreshing in their faces as the Colosseum, that huge mimic of temples of other days, towered high above them; and as they passed quickly by, Mary, looking up with a smile, remarked—

"I remember well, papa, when you took me to see the great Panorama of London, I turned my head in all directions in search of St. Paul's, and at length asked you to point it out to me; quite forgetting that we were supposed to be standing upon it, peeping out of the golden ball, I suppose."

"Ah! you did not dream of the gay world then, only thought of sight-seeing—dwarfs and Swiss giantesses, eh, Mary?"

As they cantered by the Zoological-gardens Maberly remarked—

"By the way, they tell me that Primrose-hill yonder and the adjoining ground is shortly to be within the enclosure of the Park; so some of

these days, Miss Aston, you will be able to extend your ride in that direction, and fancy yourself in the country again."

Charles, as he uttered this, thought to himself that it would be a great pity if she, even the following year, did ride in any direction as Miss Aston; but only gazed for a moment in her happy and smiling face, and was silent for at least three-quarters of a minute. Away they sped, Mr. Aston as merry and as cheerful as themselves. The pure air of heaven caused them to feel more joy and gladness than the artificial and heated atmosphere of the gayest ball-room. They entered Hyde-park by Cumberland-gate, and soon found themselves under the shade of the large elm tree opposite which the band, when playing in Kensington-gardens, is stationed. Whatever the respective bands of the regiments of the line, taking them as a whole, may be, those of our household troops—the Blues and Life-guards especially—may rank with the best of those on the continent. *They*

are, *numerically* speaking, far superior. I have heard the Austrian band on the promenade at Mayence, numbering nearly one hundred performers; and again, some years ago, at Venice, when seated around the Piazza San Marco were Turks, Greeks, and other heretics in their national costume, sipping coffee and smoking their long pipes; while the clear and moonlit sky above, all stillness and repose, seemed hushed to rest by the soft and thrilling sounds which anon, gradually swelling and bursting forth into louder and deeper tones, were echoed back by the cathedral walls. The scene, the time, and place, added much to almost the very finest band it has been my lot to hear. Now none of the varied throng around—those best skilled in music, those who had wandered far and near, and heard the finest music of other climes—could discover anything approaching to a false note, or anything but perfect harmony in the performance. "A-te-o-cara" had just been played—an air from the new ballet—and "Come, Gentile," followed, putting all in mind of the inimitable Lablache.

Our party continued their ride, or rather again crossed the bridge over the Serpentine, and proceeded at a foot pace round the Park.

"Ah, there is the fair widow Mrs. Lumley," said Charles as he returned that lady's recognition; "you will meet her at Lady Carleton's concert this evening, Miss Aston, and ought to get introduced. I have known her some time, and think you would like her. You are acquainted with her, Mr. Aston—are you not?"

"Yes," replied he; "I knew her late husband slightly, and remember their marriage, but have seen little of her of late; but she is still young, and ought to marry again. But who comes here? Sir Robert, by all that's wonderful. He must have been calling somewhere in Hyde-park Gardens, and is hurrying away to the House; he seldom is seen here at this hour."

"Miss Aston," whispered Charles, "if the question of ten or twelve hours' Polking instead of factory-working were agitated, you would vote

for the latter hour, no doubt—would you not?"

"We had better call at the house of the Humane Society as we make the round again," replied she, laughing, "and hear what they have to say on the subject."

"Au revoir," at length said Charles Maberly, as he bade adieu to his friends in Dover-street, "we shall meet this evening at Lady Carleton's.'

Now Mary was to dine, en famille, in Berkeley-square, and accompany her aunt and cousins to this concert. An old friend of Mr. Aston's, whom he had not seen for some years, having that day arrived in town, made him anxious to stay at home, have a tête-a-tête dinner, and talk over old times. We will suppose the dinner over, the servants have left the room, Mr. Aston and his friend have drawn their chairs round the fire, and the host exclaims, filling a bumper of port-wine, "Come, Norton, your health, and welcome back to Old England."

"Thank you, my good fellow. It is now upwards of nine years since I left my native

shore. It has been my lot to sojourn in many a stranger land; but right glad am I to return—more especially as the first and warmest welcome I have received has been from yourself, an old and tried friend."

Before we proceed further with the conversation, let us give a very brief account of Mr. Norton's earlier days. It matters little to say anything about his life up to the year 1835; he was then about thirty-two years of age. At that date a bank failed in which was deposited a great part of his worldly wealth. In a few weeks he went abroad, and had only just returned; but what happened during that period will, in some measure, be gathered from the following conversation:—

"My dear Norton," resumed Mr. Aston, "we all know the unlooked-for misfortune which hurried you away; you have already told me, that in a great measure your loss has been retrieved, and I heartily congratulate you, but your letters only reached me at long intervals, so

pray give me a short outline of your continental existence."

"Willingly," replied his friend. "At this moment, it seems to me but yesterday that I wished you good bye, when we parted on the deck of the steam-boat at London-bridge; we had a quick and prosperous voyage to Rotterdam; I did not make any stay there, but hurried up the Rhine as far as Basle, not being quite in the humour to pause and enjoy any of the beautiful scenery on either bank, but rather sought commune with my own thoughts; indeed, on such a great thoroughfare as that noble river, where travellers and sight-seers of so many nations congregate, one may be grave as gay, silent and abstracted without being observed, or calling forth any remark. It was the autumn-season, if you remember, the beginning of September, so, without any fixed plan, I proposed passing through Switzerland, and crossing the Simplon into Italy, in short, I found myself at the hotel on the bank of Lago Maggiore, with-

out having fixed upon any spot for my winter quarters; the scenery in the neighbourhood of that lake, and the lake of Como, is well worth seeing, so there I loitered for three or four weeks, until the cold mountain air warned me to proceed further into the country; suffice it to say, that in a short time, I settled down at Pisa, "the hospital of Italy," as it is called by some. I was still in no mood for all the gaiety and bustle of Florence, Naples, or Rome. The Arno, as you know, forms a sort of crescent, in its passage through Pisa, though it hardly wanders sufficiently from a straight line, to warrant that expression; the whole of the "lung' Arno," on the southern side, is the great resort of invalids; the houses turn their backs on the north wind, and shelter that warm promenade the whole way. It is curious to see all those on this side of the river rejoicing on the sun, while the houses on the northern side look cold and cheerless, with the early sprinkling of white frost still clinging to the roofs. If you cross over any one

of the bridges, the difference in the atmosphere is extreme, and all those in search of health, are cautioned against such a proceeding. Well, well, the summer came at length, and I took up my abode at the baths of Lucca, only thirty miles away; there are very many extremely pretty views in that part of the Duchy, but what struck me most, was the extreme beauty of many of the peasant girls. I have since wandered over the greater part of Italy, but nowhere have seen any race of peasantry that can compare with them.

"How different the manners and customs of the continent when compared with our own land; all these rustic beauties I have just mentioned, give you a word of salutation when you meet them, and "al rivederlo" if you exchange a word or two with them, without any of the real or affected shyness of our own peasantry. And I must say, whether it be from nature, or from mixing more in each other's society, thereby causing a greater interchange of ideas; the

continental peasantry do seem a more intellectual race than the lower orders of the English. But come, I must not be prosy. I have been at every court in Europe, excepting St. Petersburg; have wandered alone among all that is beautiful in the Alps and the Pyrenees; have listened to the Spanish Donzella as she sang one of her native songs, and accompanied herself on the Guitar; and have witnessed the Tarantella danced at eve by the dark-eyed beauties of the south beneath a cloudless Italian sky; and," continued he, smiling,

" I have beheld the Ephesian's miracle,
" It's column's strew the wilderness, and dwell
" The Hyena and the Jackal in their shade;
" I have beheld Sophia's bright roof swell
" Their glitt'ring masses in the sun, and have survey'd
" Its sanctuary the while the usurping Moslem pray'd."

"But still, however much food there may be for reflection in such a vagrant life, the heart and feelings pine for something more than the excitement of a constant change of scene; no

ties are formed, hardly an acquaintance you would care to meet again; necessity in the first instance, and then putting off my return until my pecuniary affairs were quite settled, caused me to stay abroad so long. But indeed, I have always thought that an English country home, its fertile fields, and in many instances, the Beech woods bordering a hill side doubly beautiful in their autumnal garb, the most enjoyable resting place this world affords, while the happy faces of the labouring men, redolent with health, and contented in their poverty, wish you good morrow as you pass them by. Every spot has its association, every cottage reminds you of some once familiar face, pillowed now, alas! in the cold grave hard by. There the neat and tidy cottage, where the nurse who guarded your infant years passed the evening of her days blessing you and yours with her latest breath; and there comes limping up the village street, the old and weather-beaten time-worn man who taught you first to ride, then with a

long rein in hand, he trudged by your pony's side, proud and happy in the service of his young master, and now a pensioner, well deserving his reward. If you wander on and enter the House of God, where first you bowed the knee, and murmured the prayer by your mother's side, the heart though sad, has a melancholy pleasure in clinging to all those relics of the past, even as the older and older we grow, our thoughts return to our early days, and all the happy season of youth is remembered as vividly as it were yesterday; then as we commence our homeward path, many a monumental stone on either hand, we perchance call to mind those beautiful words of Rogers, who in speaking of a Village Church, says:—

"Whose taper spire points to Heav'n,"

and exclaim, "Thy will be done."

Mr. Norton was thinking of the home of his own early youth, and these last few sentences were uttered in an abstracted manner and in a lower tone, as if no one but himself were in the

room; having been so long absent, he felt deeply and sincerely all he had expressed; and was so wrapped up in the past, that he was for the moment unconscious of the presence of his friend.

The inheritance of his fathers, was however, still in his possession; it had been let, but the lease would be out towards the close of the year, and then once again he would inhabit his rightful home.

"I enter into your feelings perfectly," said Mr. Aston, "and sure am I that your long sojourn abroad but makes you value the more all our institutions at home, whether for charity, or the advancement of learning and science; and above all, makes you prize the religion of our own land, not decked out in all the pomp and vanity of the Roman Catholic Church, but clad in simplicity and truth."

"Very true, my good friend, it has been so; still, sometimes when entering a church abroad, I have discovered in a remote corner, a poor

woman, with her basket by her side, with which she has, probably, just returned from market, offering up her prayer of thanks and praise to the dispenser of all good, I have wished that *our* churches were open daily; very many of those who think little on the subject of religion, would be reminded continually, that although the sabbath is a day of rest from all worldly occupation, it is not the only day for prayer and thanksgiving."

"I agree with you, but wiser heads than our's have ordered these matters, and doubtless had good reason for such a measure."

They then turned to other subjects, and parted with the prospect of another speedy meeting.

Let us follow the Mordaunts to the Concert at Lady Carleton's. All the world were there. It was now the middle of June, and Mary Aston had long since been acknowledged to be by many the beauty of the season; others might be found to surpass her, it may be, in regularity of

feature, but none in beauty of expression; her face and happy smile, told the guileless heart within; and thus very many agreed with Harry Cholmondeley, who declared that "take her for all in all, we ne'er shall look upon her like again."

Her cousins and herself (lovely and graceful the trio were) where welcomed everywhere. They now entered the room just as Lablache and Fornasari were commencing that amusing duet from "Il matrimonio segreto." After it was finished, Mrs. Lumley beckoned to Charles Maberley, who was standing near, and whispered,

"I must be introduced to your fair companion of the morning; but come," added she, in a louder tone, "give me your arm, and I will cross over to Lady Mordaunt, and make my own request."

When Mary was introduced to her she regarded her for a moment with a somewhat scrutinizing glance, but immediately said—

"I was trying to find out the likeness to your

father, Miss Aston, whose acquaintance I made some years since."

Now they had met many times during the last few weeks; so if Mary had thought at all on the subject, which she did not, she might have fancied there was something more implied in that not only scrutinizing, but almost stern look, with which she first met her. They talked of what was passing around them, and many other things; for Mrs. Lumley seemed to wish to hear the opinion of her new acquaintance on a variety of topics, trifling though they were. In a few minutes Lord Cantwell sauntered up, exclaiming—

"Really it is not fair, Mrs. Lumley, to monopolize Miss Aston in this manner. I am grieved beyond measure, at being debarred to-night from making my supplication for one Polka; but I very much wish to know if she is to make one of Lady Langford's quadrille at the approaching bal costumé."

Mary replied in the affirmative; upon which

he rejoined that he was delighted to hear it, as he himself was so fortunate as to be included; "but, in the meantime, there is the breakfast at Myrtle-grove, you ought to be there in good time to-morrow to see the boat race which is to take place before the dejeuné."

"Thank you," replied she, "I will tell papa, and have no doubt we shall be there in good time."

"The garden is very prettily laid out," added Lord Cantwell, "and slopes gradually down to the river's bank, which is there bordered by weeping willows and other trees, which shut it out, in a great degree, from the river without, which is sometimes studded with a very numerous flotilla of small boats, full of holiday folks. However, this sculling match to-morrow is only between Dalrymple and Tenby, and nobody beyond our own circle knows anything at all about it. The starting-post is only a mile up the river, and the winning-post the boat house at the foot of the garden; there ought to be, by the way, a

queen of beauty to place a chaplet on the brow of the successful knight,—what say you, Miss Aston?"

"Oh! I think that they will be so hungry after their exertions, that the good things on the breakfast table will quite content them; besides, a queen of beauty would be out of place," added she, smiling; "some one ought to enact old Father Thames, with a bulrush in his hand by way of a sceptre; he would be the fit person to crown the conquering knight. Are you going, Mrs. Lumley?"

"Oh, yes, I believe so; though the last time I was there I caught a bad cold, but then it rained the previous day, and the grass was rather damp; we have had now such a long succession of dry weather, that old people like me need not be afraid of venturing there."

The concert now re-commenced, which put an end to the conversation.

The sun shone brightly on the morning of the twentieth of June. About two o'clock many

had already arrived at Myrtle-grove, and were assembled on the lawn in front of the house; a gentle breeze was borne down the current of the river, which, cool and refreshing, was welcomed by all, after the hot and dusty drive from town. This sculling match between Sir John Dalrymple and Mr. Tenby had only been made up a few days before; neither of them, since their school days, had been much accustomed to pulling, and had it been a bad day, most assuredly the match would not have come off, being merely got up "for the fun of the thing," as Harry Cholmondely remarked; "though the two competitors may think," he added, "what is play to us is death to them; at least I should think so were I doomed to enact a galley slave this warm day."

The two competitors for the willow crown which Lord Cantwell had platted and had hung on the small flag hoisted on a post at a short distance from the bank, to which the boats belonging to the house were occasionally attached, took their stations at the appointed spot; and on

a signal given, away they pulled with all their might. Sir John being the most powerful man, soon shot a short distance a head, but keeping too close to the shore, one of his sculls got entangled in some thick weeds which enabled his adversary to overtake him; however, he soon made up his lost way, and ultimately regained the lead within fifty yards of the goal; but not being Argus-eyed, and inattentive to the shouts of warning from the bank, his scull caught the post on which the flag was hoisted, and he was sent backwards out of his light wherry into the river. Tenby, immediately behind him, heard the concussion and splash, but had not time to stop, but took the leading boat broadside and ran completely over it. Thus ended the boat race; the winner had to run away as quickly as possible, and the loser was congratulated upon his escape.

We must now, for one moment, go back to the preceding year. A Mr. Crawford had then appeared to be much smitten with the eldest Miss

Mordaunt; but was of so uncertain a disposition, and apparently of so uncontrolled a mind and fitful temper, that she had never thought of him in any other light than an occasional agreeable companion, and assuredly any nearer tie was very far from her thoughts. He was one of the guests at Myrtle Grove, and first addressed Miss Mordaunt by saying,

"I have only been in town a very few days—have been ruralising with my poor mother, who has been far from well. This is my first bit of gaiety; but I must congratulate myself that the scene opens at such an auspicious moment, and amid such happy faces as yours seems to be, Miss Mordaunt."

"Oh yes, the weather and everything seems to be in our favour; and the duchess told me just now that some peasants from the Pyrenees, clad in their native costume, would arrive shortly, and sing some of their mountain melodies."

And in that strain the conversation proceeded for a short time, when Mr. Crawford, to all

appearance impatient of further restraint, suddenly turned towards Miss Mordaunt, and begged her attention for one moment. They were then walking behind Lady Mordaunt and two or three friends of hers; in fact, were slowly making their way to the spot where the Pyrenean minstrels were shortly to assemble. Immediately she knew, as all women must and do know, what was going to take place. A few disjointed words were spoken on his part; but the calm look and steady tone of voice with which she announced that further pursuit was hopeless, and then quickly hurried on to join her mother, at once told Crawford that his long-cherished hopes, as he *then* considered them, were altogether vain and doomed to be disappointed. Truth to say, that, although he was perfectly sincere in all he said and felt at the time, he had never thought of proposing to Jane Mordaunt before he met her that morning. His feelings were warm; but he had an ill-regulated mind, and little dependance could be placed on him.

He was yet too young, both in years and experience, to think of settling down quietly, and uniting his fate for ever with so fair and gentle a being as Jane Mordaunt. She mentioned nothing of what had taken place until they returned home, and then her mother, affectionately embracing her, declared that she was very glad indeed that she had "refused to become the wife of one who seemed hardly to know his own mind on any subject."

The minstrels played their mountain airs and sang their mountain songs. All were much pleased with the novelty of their costume and their clear tuneful voices. The two Miss Burtons were there—two ladies well known in the musical world; the youngest was the great singer, and her sister generally accompanied her on the piano-forte. They were ladies of considerable property; but had seen many summers pass away, and each still continued mistress of herself. Towards the close of the day Miss Fanny Burton was asked to sing, but excused

herself under the plea of indisposition; and indeed a black piece of silk was attached in some invisible way just behind her left ear. They shortly rose to go, and George Beaumont—generally known as "Old Beau"—offered to escort them to their carriage.

"Well," inquired they of him, when returned, "have you found out what is the matter with our fair songstress? what the black patch behind her ear?"

"Not I," replied he, "but suppose that she has been scratching her head with her hind leg." He then turned to Mary Aston, and remarked that every one seemed to be bitten by the Polka-mania; that, as all the world knew, old Lord A—— took daily lessons in King-street; and then added, "by the way, I witnessed a very laughable scene in Pall Mall yesterday. The aforesaid Lord A—— was coming down the steps of the 'Travellers' Club, when he espied an old friend of his, Mr. Goodrich, on the opposite side of the street, which had very recently

been flooded by a watercart. Mr. Goodrich, on seeing Lord A——, came to a halt, who beckoned to him to cross over; upon which the former wise and prudent individual began beckoning Lord A—— in the same manner. Just then an empty hackney-cab was passing, the driver suddenly pulled up, and offered to take his Lordship across the street; but he shook his stick at him, and desired him immediately to go about his business. Mr. Goodrich, who was bound to the Athenæum, then pointed to the crossing opposite that club, and thus Lord A—— gained his point, inasmuch as he did not have to cross the street."

Mr. Aston and his daughter were to leave Dover Street at the end of the first week in July. On the day previous to their departure, we must introduce our readers to the drawing-room of Mrs. Lumley in Lower Brook Street. She was seated on the sofa, and Charles Maberley occupied a chair opposite; he too was to leave town the following day, and had

called, pour faire ses adieux. One word about Mrs. Lumley; she had married, some seven years since, when quite young and inexperienced in the world; her husband, many years her senior, died before the second year of their married life had expired, and had left her in his will the house in Brook Street, and an income of about two thousand pounds a-year; since his demise, she had lived in town, generally proceeding in the autumn to the sea-side, and occasionally visiting some of her friends during the winter months.

"Well, Mr. Maberley," began the fair widow, "so you are off for the country to-morrow, and perhaps will there meet some of those whose society you so much enjoyed when in town, and are therefore very content to take your departure; is it not so?"

"Why, yes," replied he, "I shall next month, in all probability, meet some few who have this year figured in the gay world. But do you, yourself, mean to stay much longer here?

or proceed at once to Worthing, where I think you proposed going for a few weeks?"

"Oh, it little matters," answered she, somewhat hurriedly; and then resumed in her usual tone, "I dare say I shall go either there or to Bognor; very probably the latter place, as it is not so much exposed to the sun as Worthing, where almost all the houses face the sea, without a tree near them."

Thus the conversation proceeded for a few minutes, when Charles rose to see if his horses had followed him to the door, as he had desired they should do; they had arrived, and he was in the act of returning to his seat for another few words of good bye, when Mrs. Lumley, who was sitting with her back to the window, addressed him in the following words—

"So, Charles Maberley, you are about to seek your home in the country after another London campaign, perhaps next year not to return; or it may be you are one of the Cecil Danby's of the season, and like to live on unchecked and unfet-

tered, in a continued round of excitement, which some say is another word for happiness, and will be here again. But possibly you never look forward beyond a few weeks at furthest, and cannot give one an answer."

These words were spoken almost harshly; but still her features were at variance with the tone in which she spoke, and wore to all appearance such a composed look, that he was puzzled how to continue the conversation. However, after a short pause he replied—

"Nothing has occurred to change my usual routine of living; my father and mother you are aware seldom come to town except for a very short time, but then I am always with them the greater part of the autumn and winter months, so I may hope next year to find you prosperous and well."

Mrs. Lumley smiled, but her smile was difficult to interpret; it might seem to mean, "you understand me well enough, but I will say no more." She said nothing, however, in answer to this, but held out her hand with—

"Good bye, Mr. Maberley; you are still young, with the world all before you; may you never be disappointed in any plan of happiness you may chance to form, and may God bless you."

Then, while giving utterance to these few words, her countenance did undergo a change; her brow was flushed, and her lips seemed parched and dry: and thus they parted. His step was still heard descending the stairs, when, unable any longer to restrain her feelings, she hid her face in the cushion of the sofa, and burst into tears. She—the rich, the courted, and to all appearance the favoured child of fortune—envied at that moment the humble peasant girl, who in all her poverty might still look forward to a happy and contented home, which was denied to her.

Mrs. Lumley had looked up to her late husband more as a warm-hearted adviser and friend, than as the choice of her early youth. Her parents encouraged and supported him in his suit, and she, after a little delay, yielded more, much more to their wishes, than her own. Mr. Lum-

ley and his bride took up their abode in town, and lived happily and contentedly together; he died, and she, as has been before stated, continued to reside in Brook Street. Since then five years had passed away; during that time she had acquired a pretty correct insight into human nature, had seen many a fair girl thinking every one pure and innocent as herself, bowed down with hopeless sorrow, and it may be a broken heart; or with the same cause for grief, going into the other extreme, and becoming a heartless woman of the world, with a smile for every one, but a thought beyond the hour for none.

Thus Mrs. Lumley had become in some degree distrustful of those around her, and almost fearful of encouraging the thoughts which otherwise would ever have gladly occupied her mind, the thoughts of a home shared with one she could really and truly love. Until she met Charles Maberley, she had never seen any one whose absence had caused her a moment's serious pain; and then, when a happy future rose before her mind's eye, and the path of a happy after-life

lay outstretched before her, the withering thought at the same time arose that it was destined never to be trodden by her: flowers were strewn around her, not her's the hand to gather them. She had never loved till now, and that love, unknown and untold to any one, must be hushed within her own bosom, without sympathy, and alone the trial must be borne.

Maberley had never thought of her in any other light than that of an agreeable and warm-hearted friend. He would have been very sorry to cause her any anxiety or pain, had it been in his power to have warded off the blow; but until this last interview he had never dreamt for one moment of the real state of Mrs. Lumley's feelings towards him; and even now knew hardly what to think—to what extent these feelings reached. Perhaps her manner, her look, had nothing to do with his own individual self in the way he had at first surmised. She might be only looking back on her own lot in life, and hoping that his choice might prove pro-

ductive of more lasting happiness. This might be the cause of the agitation she had shown; but then again there was no tie of relationship between them, so that could hardly be the case. Charles Maberley rode away dissatisfied and unhappy at parting thus.

. Alas, for Clara Lumley! with all the quick-sightedness of a woman, interested and wrapped up in the event, she had watched the early dawn of affection rising up in the bosom of Charles towards Mary Aston—had marked with unerring eye those feelings fast ripening into love; and then, hurrying over a few months, saw them pronouncing at the altar those words never to be recalled, which would bind them to each other for ever. What sad and soul-subduing feelings were now her's as she sought her own room, and thought upon what had just taken place! Feelings of shame that she had been betrayed into revealing all that she wished concealed from every eye, and, above all, from his; but did he read her heart aright? Could he know all that was

passing in her bosom when she uttered those few parting words? She knew not what to think; but this she knew full well, that whatever interpretation he might give them, or rather the tone and manner in which she was too conscious they were spoken, no third party, not even those nearest and dearest to him, would ever share her secret, and, perhaps, despise her. "His is a true and honourable heart," she said to herself; "so whatever my after-lot may be, may his be crowned with every happiness!"

Poor Clara Lumley! she was very miserable, and when looking forward to the future might have, with truth, exclaimed with the poet,

"Then must I plunge again into the crowd,
And follow all that Peace disdains to seek?
Where Revel calls, and Laughter vainly loud,
False to the heart, distorts the hollow cheek,
To leave the flagging spirit doubly weak.
Still o'er the features which perforce they cheer,
To feign the pleasure, or conceal the pique,
Smiles form the channel of the future tear,
Or raise the writhing lip with ill dissembled sneer."

CHAPTER III.

"GENTLE reader, but still gentler purchaser," hast thou ever been staying in the house of some well-known and much-esteemed friends during the month of August? I am very sure thou hast; and then, while the sun makes glad this last summer month, and flowers still deck the garden round, thou hast thought the society of all those assembled there far more enjoyable than all the excitement of the past London season. It is like a calm and cloudless summer's eve, illumed by the soft rays of the setting sun, whose mid-day brightness was all too glaring to be borne, having languor and depression in its train, and, it may be, causing a feverish pulse and an aching brow to those who brave its power.

It was now the fourth day of August, and Woking Hall numbered just twenty guests.

The owner, Mr. Culverton, and his amiable and accomplished wife, were old acquaintances of the Aston family; their houses were only fifteen miles apart, so that, although a little beyond the distance of a morning call, they not unfrequently met half way at the house of some mutual friend; this was the first time, however, that Mary had been in their society since she had "come out." Woking, as it is generally called, is a most enjoyable place for a short séjour, at any time, but more especially during the aforesaid month. Now all that were beneath its roof had met before; some were old acquaintances, and loved to talk over scenes in which each had taken part; in short, a very merry party. But we will not say further; they shall, in course of time, speak for themselves.

"Indeed, my dear Mrs. Culverton," said Sir Edward Mordaunt, as he entered the breakfast-room, "I always feel ten years younger when staying in this house, and Tom, there," added he, pointing to Mr. Floyd, who was an old

schoolfellow of his, "feels the same, and I'll be bound, has added at least a mile this morning to his usual early walk."

Five or six of the batchelor guests slept at what was called "The Farm," situated about two hundred yards from the house; among these was Mr. Norton; he that moment arrived, followed by Mr. Mostyn and young Mordaunt; others dropped in one by one; Lady Louisa Drayton last of all, but she glided so noiselessly into the room, that few were aware of her entrance until she had taken her allotted place at the table.

Some there are who laud a solitary dressing-gown-and-slipper-breakfast, with a newspaper or book by their side; but away with such selfish and unsociable mortals, or let them but once, par exemple, make one round the cheerful and hospitable board at Woking, and they will be of a different opinion for ever after.

"Well," said our host, "what is to be the order of the day? To-morrow is our cricket-

match, and Harley has promised to be here with his eleven in good time, so that we can look forward to finishing the game before the dinner-hour."

All, however, seemed to think that they could chat and stroll about until the evening, without any fixed plan of occupation.

"The young ladies can practise some new Polkas," Mostyn remarked, "while we inspect the new walk Culverton has lately made, and the cricketers can gather strength for the morrow by dolce farniente to-day."

I know no such good proof of a well-assorted party, as when, with no amusement or particular occupation on the tapis, the hours pass cheerily away, and a cordon sanitaire is drawn between the present calm and rational enjoyment, and all the past cares and annoyances of the world without. Man is eminently a social being, and gathers a goodly stock of useful information from communion with his fellow-men, which serves to steer aright his course through life;

and when mixing in the society of the fairer portion of the creation, whose gentle nature and sweet converse lulls some latent care to rest, and throws a brighter light o'er his future path, the rainbow hues of youth and hope again resume their early brilliancy, and make him forget the stormy past.

The morrow came—the tent was pitched in the cricket-field, and at eleven o'clock the game commenced. The Woking Club had been in existence three or four years, but truth to say, any advocate of cricket, who chanced to be staying in the house during the summer-season, was dubbed an honorary member of the same. Charles Maberley, for instance, who had just arrived, never having played here before, was a new member, "and took his place at the stumps accordingly," as somebody remarked. The opposing eleven were made up much in the same way by Mr. Harley, who lived in the neighbourhood. However, the Woking Club did not confine themselves entirely to such home matches,

but had, a short time since, played a Club of old standing in the county and defeated them; and a match with the neighbouring garrison was in contemplation. The day was fine, and all the ladies by turns made their appearance on the ground, where, of course, they were welcomed by everybody, with the exception of a whole colony of wasps, who disputed the entrance to one of the tents, in which was deposited beer and other drinkables for the cricketers. Drayton had kindly taken upon himself the office of "scorer," and deputed some one to bring him a sandwich from this invaded tent; the plate was placed before him on the table, and, while watching the game, he put a sandwich into his mouth; a wasp had, most unfortunately, taken up his abode therein, and stung his lip; which caused poor Drayton to jump up in a great hurry and skip about, while everybody pitied him, but could not refrain from laughing heartily. As the old rhyme has it—

"How sad his lot who neither lost nor won."

So when, at seven o'clock, it was found impossible to finish the game, each party stoutly held up their superior play, but consoled themselves by saying "they hoped to live to fight another day." Woking could boast of a large neighbourhood; many families resided within a circumference of three or four miles; so that the evening dance was well attended. It was a very pretty sight to see the two sisters, Jane and Eliza Mordaunt, dance the Polka together: even the whist players in the adjoining room forgot their game, and left the odd tricks to take care of themselves, while they peeped through the open doorway, and thought of the merry days when they were young. Anon, some wood-notes wild were heard at intervals, from a distant corner, somewhat resembling the thrush's note, when the poor bird is troubled with a sore throat: they were, however, warbled in perfect time with the Amalien Polka, then playing. Some, perchance, of my readers who were there that night may remember from whose throat these "wild

notes" came. The hours sped swiftly on, the time of parting was drawing near, when Fortescue (Mrs. Culverton's brother) was asked to sing; he whispered something to young Mordaunt, on his way to the piano forte, and immediately commenced

"Kathleen Mavourneen, the daylight is breaking."

And, again, when he came to the fourth line, instead of the word "slumbering," he changed it into

"What lingering still;"

And looked around smilingly as he sang.

In half an hour, the last carriage had driven off, and all tripped up stairs to bed, while those who had to cross the lawn to their sleeping-rooms were challenged by an old wakeful lord of the hen-roost, who must have awakened all his seraglio with his early crowing. Let us, for one moment, while the voice of merriment is hushed, and all is still, give one thought to Mrs. Lumley. She had taken a house at Bognor, and there, alone, pondered o'er the past. Though still in

the prime of life, and beautiful as she had ever been, the winter of the heart was hers; while all around might hail with pleasure the festive scenes in which she herself might hereafter mingle; while happy faces beamed around her, life was henceforward a dreary waste to her,—no green spot in all the wilderness, where she might find rest and peace. Time, the soother of all sorrows, would doubtless cause her to feel less poignantly; but the blow was yet too recent—the withering of her hopes too deeply felt—to make her reason calmly on the subject.

How many of us, from different causes it may be, have felt that utter prostration of spirits, when hope seems gone, and despair begins to entwine itself round every thought and feeling of the future.

"The tree will wither long before its fall,

* * * * * *

The day drags on, though clouds shut out the sun;
And thus the heart will break, yet brokenly live on."

Whether her prophecy, told only to herself,

regarding the future union of Charles Maberley and Mary Aston, proves true or not, Charles himself, while in town, never allowed his thoughts to roam so far into the future. We will only say, what every one has felt, that a few hours' intercourse in the country goes further to make people really acquainted with each other than as many days in town. Thus, Mary had never before seemed so amiable, and ——, but enough; let us, too, close our eyes, perhaps dream, like him, and awake in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

It was the first day of the Stukeley races. The race-course is situated on the banks of the Thames, on the farther side of which is a beech wood of considerable extent. Numerous paths intersect its steep sides, and many a family, keeping holiday, might be seen grouped around an opening where a tree had been lately felled, and which commanded a view of the entire course. The younger members of our party crossed the river for half an hour, and witnessed one of the races from a station half-way up the hill's side.

"I remember papa's saying," remarked Mary Aston, "that he met the late Sir David Wilkie on the race-course some years ago, who said that it was the prettiest scene he had witnessed for a length of time; but he ought to have climbed up here, and fancied himself a Gulliver, looking down upon a Lilliputian race-course."

"Those swans yonder," said Charles Maberley, "who seem angry at their rightful domain being invaded, put me in mind of two lines from a poem, entitled 'Woodland Echos, written by a Stukeley votary of the Muses. You must know that a solitary black swan for many years might be seen swimming above the bridge. His white brethren would not associate with him; on the contrary, chased him away whenever he came near them, so our poet, in describing him, says,

'He sadder than Othello moved,
For ah! no Desdemona loved.'

"I believe it is a fact that he took wing one morning, and has not been heard of since."

"They did but imitate," said Norton, "some of the late task-masters in our West India islands before the emancipation of poor blacky. You know the old story of the Scotch overseer, who, in serving out their daily rations, used to cut a fish in half, and make it pass as a whole fish, which was really their proper allowance. The slaves under his jurisdiction used to say, 'Me

nebber know fish have one eye till catchmen come to Jamaica.'"

Mary laughed with the rest; but her eyes were turned towards the swans swimming below. Perhaps she was pitying poor Othello's fate, thinking it very hard he should have been deprived of his lady-love.

The Hurdle race was shortly to take place, so they began their descent. A lottery had been made out, and they had all agreed to meet in the stand to see the race.

"Polka against the field," cried Mostyn. "Who has been fortunate enough to draw her? Polka carries the day everywhere. I have just been told by Frazer that the name of the American President that is to be was originally Pollock—that he was in a menial situation in Belfast a few years since, and passed under that name, and now calls himself Polk—doubtless, vain man, thinking to pay a compliment to, or borrow lustre from, the queen of the ball-room. So Polka will assuredly go-a-head, as Jonathan would say. Ah, Miss Mordaunt, you've drawn

her, have you? She's sure to win; but do not take a Pennsylvanian bond in payment, even if General Polk himself tried to persuade you to do so."

And now the course is cleared, save and except of one unfortunate dog, who, amid the shouts of the profanum vulgus, and looking right and left for succour, like the hare and many friends, runs the gauntlet through the line on either hand.

"Japhet in search of a father," exclaims some one in the stand; but nobody seems inclined to adopt him. There, he has passed the bounds at last, and the bell announcing that the horses have started peals loudly forth. The starting post was about five hundred yards from the Grand Stand, which passed, they had to make the round of the course, and again come up the straight run in to the winning-post. Coquette was leading as they passed the first time, closely followed by Viscount and Paddy Whack, Polka fourth, Jerry and the Unknown driving all before them; at the fourth hurdle, Coquette fell, Paddy close behind her, swerved, jumped high in the air, and came down with his hind legs

the top of one of the posts; he was then passed by Polka, who was two lengths a-head of all round the last turn, Viscount in vain endeavoured to overtake her; she took the two remaining fences in gallant style, and was declared the winner, then, as she was brought back to the winning-post, and her jockey dismounted for the purpose of being weighed, the band belonging to the strolling players stationed opposite, struck up a Polka, and the clown danced a solo in honour of the all-conquering heroine.

Let us accompany the greater part of the Woking party in their walk to Merton, three days subsequent to the Stukeley Races.

Merton is the post-town, and about three miles distant from Woking; some of the lanes leading thither, though almost impassable in the winter, now formed a far pleasanter promenade than the high road.

"We must buy all our losings at Miss Irving's," said Maberley, "she is so very tender in her

inquiries about the healths of all our relations and ourselves, that we must not desert her."

This Miss Irving, good old soul, had for a length of time, jointly with her brother, kept a linen-draper's shop in Merton: her peculiarity was not so much the asking about the welfare of "all at home," as she sometimes expressed herself, as answering "very glad to hear it, very glad to hear it," whatever report you might chance to give; when they entered the shop Miss Irving bustled about as usual.

"Gloves, sir? Yes, sir. What colour, sir?"

"Hope Mr. Culverton is quite well, ma'am?"

"Quite well," responded Mrs. Culverton, "thank you."

"Very glad to hear it, I'm sure, ma'am."

"Smaller size? Yes, sir. Hope Mr. Maberley is quite well, sir?"

"Broke his arm and leg yesterday," answered his son.

"Very glad to hear it; very glad to hear it."

"Any other article, sir?"

She had not the least notion how happy she

had expressed herself at hearing of the fractured bones of Charles's honoured papa, but, warm-hearted old thing, was delighted to see the "young people so merry."

And now they proposed to pay a visit to Mrs. Hankey on their way home. Mrs. Hankey was also a delightful old lady in a mob cap, numbering some seventy winters; her daughter perhaps twenty years younger. Their great delight was to do the honours of their garden, which was kept in high order. The yew-tree walk was the great lion. In fact, the house, or rather the site of the present house, had been an abbey in former days. Some old detached walls were yet remaining to tell of the past, and this avenue of yew trees was supposed to date back to the old monkish times. A somewhat tragical story in connection with the walk was occasionally whispered about; but the lord and master had long been dead, a generation had passed away, and it was well nigh forgotten.

Mrs. Hankey and "Sarah" had their bonnets on when their visitors were announced; so a

stroll beneath the yew-tree shade was proposed and willingly acceded to. Here was the latest dahlia in full bloom, and there the pride of the valley reared its lowly head, beautiful in its simple loveliness; and then the turf, nature's mossy carpet, was so smooth and glossy like the far-famed velvet lawn on the side of the Chiltern Hills. The old ivy-covered wall—that relic of other days, where the linnet and the thrush now built their nests—formed the boundary on one side; while the old tower of the village church hard by might be seen peeping through the trees on the other side.

"So you have been very gay, Miss Aston—have you not?" said Mrs. Hankey. "Mrs. Culverton has had a houseful of young people like yourself, just in the spring-tide of existence. My day has long gone by for going out anywhere; but I am always happy to see those who are kind enough to call upon me, and tell of all the gay doings in the neighbourhood."

"Oh, we have indeed been very gay, I can assure you," answered Mary; "and during the

whole time we have been at Woking, it has been fine weather; so we have been everywhere; twice have had a water-party to the spring, and the two Miss Parkers sang so delightfully that everbody declared that music on the waters was far preferable to the sweetest music in a drawing-room."

"Except, perhaps, the Polka," said the old lady, smiling; "that, they tell me, is the rage just now; for I have never, and probably shall never see it danced."

"Oh, to be sure, there are exceptions to every general rule; we went once to the Haymarket Theatre last season," Eliza Mordaunt observed, "and heard Mr. Parry sing about the Polka-mania. It was a very amusing song. Among many other jokes, he declared there must be a 'Brussel's revolution;' and indeed I do think our dresses must be made shorter than is the fashion now, for they suffer much more than the carpets do."

"Ah, Mrs. Culverton," said Charles, "Fairy has found her way into the garden. I hope she

will behave herself, and not trample on the flower-beds."

Very shortly after the dog began scratching with his hind-legs in a most determined manner, scattering the close-clipped grass right and left. What had previously taken place was never accurately ascertained; however it served as a signal to depart: so they wished good-bye, and commenced their homeward route, and arrived at home just as the dressing-bell was ringing.

A few days after this the party broke up. Many looked forward to another speedy meeting at Waddesdon and elsewhere; so, warmly thanking their host and hostess—"Au revoir," and they were gone.

On the 30th of November last Winchester was the head-quarters of the forty — regiment. From twenty to twenty-five officers were seated round the mess-table on that day. Some were discussing their adventures by flood and field in a run with the fox-hounds that morning; others talked of a late battue at Avigton, in which a vast number of pheasants, and hares innumerable, were re-

ported to have been killed; while a few talked politics, as they sipped their port wine. Three or four were going on leave of absence the following day, Frank Stirling among others. He had been invited to spend a month with his old schoolfellow, Charles Maberley, who had promised him a mount from his father's stable, and a merry Christmas amongst their neighbours and friends.

The forty—was the prince of corps, had formed part of the light brigade in the Peninsula, and never were a better set of fellows congregated round a mess-table. They all pulled well together. No separate interests, no adverse parties, which is sometimes the case, and when so is very much to be deplored—affecting, not only the well-being of the officers, but I am very sure militating much against the discipline and esprit du corps of the men under their command; for what, after all, is a regiment but a large family? any member of which becoming disunited from the rest, affects, in a more or less degree, the whole, and then, like the old fable of the bundle of sticks, which, firmly bound together, it is im-

possible to break or rend asunder; but when divided or cast loose, a child may destroy.

What light-bob in the whole service does not remember the gallant Colonel B.? and what officer under his immediate command can ever forget that honest, upright, good-hearted man, who, heart and soul, was wrapt up in his regiment, causing the laurels won in the tented field still to gleam bright and unfaded, though many years had passed away since called upon to meet the enemy in their country's cause? When a young officer first joined, how kind and affectionate was the colonel's manner towards him. The few words of counsel and advice about his conduct and expenses won the young recruit's heart directly, and made him anxious to please and do his duty.

"Economy is the life and soul of the army," was his favourite saying; and how much is comprised in those words! for let a man begin his career well, whatever pursuit or profession he may be engaged in, and his good resolutions will gather strength in his riper years; whereas, the

companionship of the wild and vicious on his first becoming lord of himself, frequently entails much unhappiness in after years. And how much of content and self-satisfaction depends upon regulating our expenses at the outset, particularly in a military life! This the colonel well knew; for he had know many a young man's prospects blighted, and their present happiness destroyed by early extravagance, step by step, leading on to utter ruin.

This is naturally very much more the case, in these piping times of peace, when the army is by many looked upon, not as a profession, but a gay, idle life, as a field well suited to a carpet knight who can rough it on a bottle of port and a beef-steak.

"Well, Dick," said Paget, "you're off for ould Ireland to-morrow? You must have a day with the Kilkenny, and tell us about all our old friends on your return."

"I shall have more shooting than hunting where I am going to," answered he; but at all events, on my way through Dublin I'll make old

Hunt mount me with the garrison hounds, and have a scurry over the Ashbourne country. Whiteboy, you beggar, why don't you cross the water now, instead of delaying it till next month?"

This was addressed to Burford, a fellow-countryman of Levison's. They had joined about the same time, and were great friends. I could swell many a page in describing this cheerful party, but it would be scarcely interesting to any one but a member of the old corps, who, indeed, needs nothing to remind him of all his old friends.

"Come, Galley," said Stirling to the surgeon of the regiment, who was seated opposite, "you must set my servant all to rights ere my return; he has had a long sick bout of it."

Gallini was an Italian by birth, but had, at an early age, entered into the service of his Britannic Majesty.

"Oh, my good fellow," answered he, "he will soon be quite well; only wants strength, and I have directed that he should live like one wood-

cock," meaning fighting cock. Now, apropos of this slight mistake in the Queen's English, I must tell a story which happened, I think, at Devonport, some years previous to this.

The good doctor was in the habit of occasionally prescribing for a civilian or two residing there. Happening one day to call on a lady of his acquaintance, she complained of not feeling quite herself. Nothing particular was the matter with her; but she had not been quite well "since the trip to Mount Edgcumbe," a few days before—probably had been out somewhat late, and got a chill. He felt her pulse, said it was nothing, but advised her to take everything "warm milk," meaning thereby to swallow nothing cold, but milk warm. A week elapsed, when he paid her another visit, and found her terribly bilious and yellow as an autumn leaf, having followed his prescription to the letter; having, doubtless, taken under her protection two donkeys and a cow—at all events, she had imbibed milk ever since, and was really ill.

"Bring in the morning paper, William," said Crosby, to the mess-waiter, who just then brought in some more wine; then added, turning to his neighbour at the table, "I have been away all day, and have not seen the "Gazette:" we have a new hand gazetted, I hear. Ah, here he is: John Thomas Edward Wilton Ogden! Gad, he must have had half a dozen god-fathers, at least! This puts me in mind of an old story of my father's, who joined his corps at the same time as two others, who beat him out of the field as far as names went: one was called Polycarpus William Taylor; the other, Onesiphorus David Jones."

And now the fourth, fifth, or sixth allowance —heaven knows which!—is nearly finished, it is time to go, one begins to talk of "to-day;" another, who is going on leave, is fast asleep, and perhaps dreaming that he is already at home, welcomed by his sister with a kiss, and tenderly squeezing his fair cousin's hand. Old Chicken, too, the huge regimental dog, having

devoured many a hard biscuit, is snoring loudly on the hearth-rug, dreaming of "the meat-horn," the sound of which always caused him to wheel about directly, and hie away at a long trot to where the daily rations where cut up.

"Come, Gunner, one more song; tune up, old boy, and then we'll start."

He who answered to that name once again took up his guitar, and warbled his standard song—

"Listen, dear Fanny, listen to me;"

which finished, away they all went to bed; one humming, as he crossed the barrack square—

"We won't go home till morning;"

and another—

"I'm over young to marry yet."

The owner of Ditton, and his son, were out when Frank Stirling arrived. Mrs. Maberley, however, was at home to welcome him, and said that they "were gone on a shooting excursion, about three miles off, but would return very

shortly;" then added, "she was very sorry there was no one but themselves in the house, but she expected some friends during the following week."

In half an hour, the squire's loud but good-humoured voice was heard in the hall.

"Your friend is come, Charles; go in, find him, and bring him out here, while I get a glass of sherry, to keep out the cold, for I am wet through and through. Ah, how d'ye do, Mr. Stirling? glad to see you; not been here long, I hope; but you must excuse me, I must go and change my things. Charles, there, will show you your room; so good bye, for the present."

It is not our purpose to give any account of the Ditton proceedings; let us inquire what Charles Maberley had been doing since we last saw him, three months since. Truth to say, those few weeks had wrought a great change in all his thoughts and plans for the future; he had met Mary Aston several times since they parted at Woking, and had been staying for a fortnight during the past month at Waddesdon. Day by

day he had seen in her more and more to love and admire; dutiful and affectionate to her father —ever showing kindness and good-will to everybody.

Early love has been called "a dream, at best:" you picture to yourself a being clothed with every beauty of form and feature, and grace of mind; one, with whom to share your lot, would be perfect happiness; to be parted from, misery and despair. With some, indeed, it is but a dream; for will such feelings last?—will they bear the test of time, unless they have no deeper root than the caprice of the passing hour—no surer guide than the sense and eye? When misfortune, poverty, or any of the evils common alike to the peasant and the peer, throw a shadow o'er the past, and briars and thorns bestrew our onward way, we wake, alas! too late to the utter vanity of any lasting happiness without our home is blest with the approval of a good conscience, and a sure trust, that He whose ear is ever open to the heartfelt prayer, will bless our lot: we

then too plainly see, on one hand, the straight though narrow path which leads to calm and uninterrupted happiness; on the other, the green but devious path—the thronged highway of life—through which we have endeavoured to reach the wished-for goal, and failed. But our choice is made—our race is run—and there is no return: we may serve as a landmark—a warning to others: but we ourselves cannot retrace our steps, and begin life's pilgrimage again. Not so with Charles Maberley; he had seen Mary in her home, surrounded by the thoughtless and the gay; he had seen her by the lowly cottage hearth, ministering to the wants of the poor and the distressed; he knew her observant of all the duties of religion—had heard her spoken of by all, as like her poor mother in every way; and thus be loved her.

Mary herself, too young and artless to conceal the pleasure that his society afforded her, had not, until she had last parted from him, even whispered to herself that he was aught to her,

much more than the others to whom she had just wished good bye. Perhaps she now wished him at her side, in her solitary village walk. Perchance, in her still night-dreams his image rose before her, and she thought of him when waking. But enough; "such things are untold."

A few visitors arrived at Ditton, and there was the usual routine of field sports, &c. Old Maberley was fond of his glass of port wine, and thought Father Mathew a madman; "for how on earth can the Irish live in their damp climate without a drop now and then," he used to remark, when the name of the Apostle of Temperance was mentioned: "they put whiskey in their tea, though, I'll be bound; and small blame to them!"

"No feeling for heads at Donnybrook Fair, now," remarked Frank; "no bumps for a phrenologist to lecture upon; that is a good thing, at all events. So Paddy may sing with the French Knight in the 'Daughter of St. Mark,

'And thus, unmindful of the past,
We may be happy yet.'"

"Come, let's have one more glass, and then to the ladies," said their host, "we are summoned, if not by beat of drum, by a thumping on the piano—they want you young people to dance, so let's be off."

On the last Thursday in the year, Sir John Copeland's fox-hounds met at Murseley Hall. Sir John had arrived at Sir Cuthbert Eastlake's the previous evening. Foxes had been seen prowling about the covers during the past week, so a sure find was at least anticipated, and if everything favoured them, a good run over the Waltham vale. The wind blew lightly from the southward, but the clouds rode high in the heavens, and there was little chance of rain, so a very large field was at the meet at the appointed hour. Many a fair equestrian formed the centre of a group around the cover side, Mary Aston among the number, accompanied by her father and Mr. Norton, who was staying with them at Waddesdon.

"Good morning, Sir John," said Mr. Maberley, as he trotted up on his cover hack, "if you can but keep the field in order, and prevent them from mobbing the fox on the farther side there, we shall have a glorious burst, I make no doubt; all the old women swear their hen-roosts have suffered much lately, so that we have their best wishes for a speedy find, at all events."

"We must wait another quarter of an hour, Maberley, before the hounds are put into cover. I pledged my knightly word at the breakfast-table, not to begin operations until half-past eleven o'clock; some people are expected from a long distance off."

And now all had arrived, every one was mounted on the pride of his stable, as the day's sport had been long canvassed, and many of the houses in the neighbourhood were filled with Christmas guests. George Montford, Harley, Crawford, and Vaughan, generally known by the name of "The Vicar," and who always talked of his horse as being a famous one over an

"*empire*," and a host of others, all old members of the hunt, were there; we need not speak of them further, but turn to our own party, who had just been joined by Frank Stirling and Charles Maberley. Frank was introduced to Mr. Aston, and Charles began paying *the compliments of the season* to Mary, who, not being quite sure of her horse's good behaviour, had been posted by her father on a slightly rising ground, about two hundred yards from the cover-side.

"Well, if you do not all break your necks this morning, we shall meet at Sir Cuthbert Eastlake's this evening, I suppose; I am told, that all the world are to be there, to celebrate the coming of age of his son and heir."

"Yes, indeed, Miss Aston, we are going to wind up the old year well, and sacrifice a fox to-day. I hope to commemorate the event. Ah! there comes Shirley, surrounded by his four-legged family; you will see them beat the cover famously from here, but I hope Marmion will

not pine to distinguish himself when the trumpet calls away, and all the steeds are in motion.."

"Oh! I think not, he has a great friendship for papa's horse, and will not wish to leave him; he must content himself with neighing. 'On, Stanley, on,'" added Mary, laughing, "and then return quietly home."

The hounds jumped into cover, which was of some extent, stretching in one direction, for nearly half a mile along the side of the hill, it was however, of no great breadth in any part. Soon a challenge from one of the leading hounds was given, and all were on the tip-toe of expectation. Another minute, and the huntsman dashed down one of the rides, exclaiming, "the right bells a-tolled, Sir John, Haick to him, gay lad, forrard, Heretic—away, away!" All the field were on the move—two or three followed the huntsman through the cover—the greater part turned their horses' heads towards a lane which led out to where the fox was expected to break; just then, a halloo from the opposite

hill announced that the fox had been viewed away: and Parker, galloping swiftly by, cried out to Charles, that he would be "too late, unless he was off directly:" two fields alone divided him from the hounds; but then the first fence was such as is seldom faced, except in the heat of the chace; no choice, however, was now left, if a good start was an object, so Charles, uttering a hurried "au revoir" to Mary, gave his horse the rein, and away he went. Pioneer, a good steady hunter, very fast, and with courage enough for anything, had been impatient for a start for the last five minutes, so that his first few strides were taken blindly, with his head high in the air; but ere he had gone fifty yards, he had settled down into his long gallop, and with ears bent forward, seemed to scan the opposing fence; it was indeed in all parts, save one, a stopper, even to the best mounted, it had formerly been part of the boundary of the park on that side, and now a high stiff ragged hedge, with the ruins of a paling intersecting it, and a

wide drain on the farther side, made it indeed a difficulty not easily surmounted; at the corner, was what had been formerly a bridle-gate, now half concealed and knotted round by briars, it however, was an opening—a poacher, perchance, had now and then climbed over it, so that the hedge rose high on either side; thither the practised eye of Charles directed his horse; one word of encouragement, and he was safely over, drain, grate, and all left behind him. "Thank God," was involuntarily uttered by Mary, and then, as he rose the opposite hill, and turned lightly in his saddle, while he raised his hat, and seemed again to bid farewell to her he loved the best, the warm blood rushed into Mary's cheeks, as she waved her hand, but *he* could not mark that silent language of the heart, as he took his onward course, and gradually attained the foremost rank. Away they went, by Waltham church, then turning to the right, drew near the windmill, where the vale was supposed to commence, then the pace became severe.

Henry Bouchier, on his famous fencer, having had a bad start, cut across Shottesbrook-park, and took the high paling into the road safely and well. Away, away, onward they sweep, the old hands settle down into their places, Mr. Norton going straight and well, as he used to do in other days. And now the brook which meanders through the vale, approaches—the ground is somewhat heavy and rotten on either bank—the water after the late rains, bubbles turbid and quickly on, as if loth to be confined within its natural limits—much depends on the steady hand of the rider, and the straightforward coolness of the horse, and something perhaps, on the good fortune of the hot and rushing steed, who, if he chance not to miss his stride, will, doubtless, get over well, but any halt or boggle must inevitably cause him to flounder in the midst; rushes all torn and withered lined the sides, and here and there a stunted willow caused one or two to diverge from the straight line they were pursuing.

Thomas Le Marchant and Harley took it nearly abreast. Charles followed; but Poultney's horse, who hitherto had carried him right well, slipped just as he was rising for the jump, and fell heavily against the opposite bank, his rider over his head, but luckily, on dry land; he was, however, soon pulled out, a mass of mud and green weeds; and being nursed a little for a field or two, again resumed his position at the tail of the hounds.

It was evident now, that the fox, bending away to the right, was trying to make for his old haunts, but ere the five intervening miles of ground could be passed over, the hounds running breast high with a burning scent, it was hoped he would be run into, before he could reach the cover.

Oh, it was a heart-stirring sight to see the fox crossing the green and springy pasture-grounds in full view of the pack. Shirley on his chestnut, with all the pride of a successful huntsman depicted on his honest features, and pointing

a-head every now and then, while muttering to Charles who rode near him,

"Blood, sir—blood, sir—he can't escape 'em now;" and then once again, "Do you mind old Hecuba, sir? How she's ever foremost at the last! Better incline a little to the right now, sir, and take the stile into the lane."

Now came the tug of war in earnest. They were within five large fields of High Heavens, the cover to which pug was making for life or death. Seven only were in the same field as the hounds, each striving his best for the first place. Nearer and nearer the hounds drew upon their prey, who knowing well his race was nearly run, still strained every nerve to gain his hiding-place. No use, my gallant fellow, your brush is all that will soon remain to tell your fate.

"Who whoop—who whoop!" He's run into in the open, within fifty yards of the cover side. The last fence was a teazer, a wattled hedge, rising on a high bank, and a new-cut ditch on the take-off side. All got well over. Mr. Nor-

ton's new and almost untried horse landed safely on the other side. His master's firm seat and strength of arm had previously done him good service when careering through the deep country in the early part of the run.

"An hour and twenty minutes without a check," said Shirley, looking at his watch, after the rites of the chace had been performed. "Sir John will be right pleased to hear of this. It is the best run we have ever had from the Murseley covers. We've gone over full fifteen miles of country."

"Glorious run indeed," said Mr. Maberley, who then cantered up. "I should have been here before, but helped to pull that young friend of my son's out of a ditch. Horse and all were on the broad of their backs. You must come again soon after this; but we shall meet your master presently I dare say, and then we will put the question to him. I know Sir Cuthbert will be much pleased if you draw his covers again shortly."

Frank Stirling was soon discovered wending his way towards them, with the reins hanging loose on his horse's neck, and endeavouring, in the most persevering manner, to strike a light for his cigar; which at length being accomplished, he joined the others, just as they were turning their horses' heads homewards.

"Not such a figure after all as my friend Poultney was half an hour since: he looked just like Moses in the bullrushes, and his horse like a drowned rat, while I have escaped with only a littly dry mould on my back; but a shocking bad hat it must be owned," added he, as he took it off, and vainly tried to make it resume its former shape. "Your horse is not hurt I hope, Mr. Maberley. The ditch was as dry as I am at this moment, so he won't catch cold: not his fault that he fell, only his misfortune, like the man said when he sold his friend a horse with one eye. Who was first in the winning field, Charley? Who has won the hard-earned trophy of the chace?"

"Oh, we are going to hang it high in the castle hall, underneath the misseltoe-bough to remind Sir Cuthbert that foxes rank higher in the estimation of all well-wishers to genuine old English sport than hares and pheasants."

"Bravo! There is good policy in that proceeding," answered he with the damaged hat. "It will keep alive the *tale* of this wondrous chevy. Will you have a cigar? Come, button up, and smoke the pipe of contentment."

The hounds now began to jog quietly homewards. The Maberleys and Frank had been invited to dine and sleep at Murseley Hall, where their grooms were awaiting them to take home their tired horses. The rest of the field, scattered in all directions, many about to return for the ball, but thinking just then more of gruel for their horses and dinner for themselves than dancing.

"Good-bye, good-bye. Brick Bridge next week; you'll be there:" and the last man trotted slowly away.

CHAPTER III.

We have sung the praises of an English country fire-side, and of a merry meeting during the last of our summer months; but all other meetings in the year must yield the palm to a Christmas gathering, which, though not near so general as they used to be in olden times, when the close of the year was looked forward to by all, both old and young, as a season peculiarly set apart, as it were, for the assembling together of every member of a family: still, for their very unfrequency, perhaps, are now rendered doubly enjoyable. Then, at this great jubilee of our faith, all family feuds and disagreements are forgotten, and any disunion arising from politics, that great arena of misunderstanding, confusion, and strife, is remembered no more. Such feelings pervaded

the entire party which had for some days been assembled at Murseley Hall.

The ball this evening was, as has been before said, to celebrate the coming of age of young Eastlake. It had been long announced, and all the neighbourhood for miles around had promised to attend, and drink health and success to the future lord of Murseley. What calm, contented happiness depicted in the father's face! What pride in the mother's looks as she welcomed her guests, and every now and then stole a glance towards her first-born son, who had never caused her a moment's anxiety or pain! Surely in all this gay throng the past was passing in review before the eye of that fond mother, her early married life, her delight at clasping the little stranger to her bosom, ushered into the world under such happy auspices; and then the hopes and fears attendant on his youth and inexperience when he first quitted the shelter of his father's roof. But her child remembered those simple lines taught him in his nursery home:—

" Who, when I climb'd from chair to chair,
Who watch'd me then with anxious care,
Lest I should fall and hurt a hair?
My mother."

And grew up a blessing to his parents and a credit to his school.

Colinet and his band were in their places; the little leader of the troop with his flageolet by his side was exchanging a word every now and then, in broken English, with a passer by, assuring Miss Parker that he had with him "a new Polka which even she had never before heard played;" and then descanting on the size of the room, and the floor being "si glissante." He was in high spirits, and said he would play "jusqu' au commencement de la nouvelle année," if they would be pleased to keep the ball up so long.

Red-coats, not belonging to her Majesty's household brigade, but the members of Sir John Copeland's hunt, were dotted about the room. The young, the beautiful, and gay—health and innocence in their train—were gradually arriving,

and where could a happier scene be found? The dancing commences, and let us join a group standing near the door-way which leads into the card-room.

"Well," said Sir Edward Mordaunt, "it does one's heart good to see so many old friends gathered together; but all the fair dames with whom we used to tread a measure 'in our hot youth when George the Third was King,' are now seated quietly around, contemplating their daughters' performances. I could point out a grandmother or two, if need be, whom you, Tom, used to admire vastly in other days."

"Ah!" answered Tom Floyd, "we are but autumn trees; every year, nay, every month, the yellow leaves wither and fall around us, till at length the branches must become forsaken and bare."

"Gad! he is quite poetical, to-night," remarked Wood; "but he ought to persuade one of his old lady-loves to trip it with him on the light fantastic toe, just to show they still reckon their existence by summers, instead of winters."

"Hear, hear," said Sir Edward, "I second the motion: the only puzzle in Tom's mind is, whom to choose; l'embarras de la richesse; but I advise him to do as the tenth were reported to have done in Dublin, when a partner was proposed them, 'trot her out, and let's see her paces;' and faith he had better do the same, ere he pops the question."

"Dance! to be sure I will," said Floyd, "if they end with a good old English country dance; I'll go down the middle and up again, with the youngest of them. But look at Eliza, there; she has torn her gown in the mèlé. This Polka must be anything but a sinecure for the ladies' maids."

"How well Mrs. Culverton dances; she is dancing with your son, I think, Mordaunt," Mostyn remarked; "but they turn about at such a rate, and that tall grenadier," pointing to Frank Stirling, "shuts out the view. I suppose he is afraid to try his hand at the Polka, for for fear he should find himself suddenly on the

broad of his back, as they tell me he was this morning."

Our young friend Charles had danced a quadrille with Mary Aston; they had both expressed themselves sure, quite sure, that this was the very nicest ball of the whole year; not one of those numerous assemblies in town, where some must hurry away to another party, or recruit their strength by going early to bed, for some engagement on the morrow. The greater part had long been known to each other, and had many a word to interchange beyond the small talk of a London campaign. But with Charles, and it may be with others in this festive scene, there was one whose presence was hailed as the brightest star of the evening, the chief cause of his present happiness, and destined, as he hoped, to illume his future path. We might recount every word of their conversation as it met the ear; but need we try to pourtray their feelings during the earlier hours of the evening? Each felt that they were all in all to each other; but

not a word was uttered by either which, were it heard by those around them, could betray the secret, which but slumbered for the moment in the bosom of each. Could they have known that the parents of both were silently each in different corners of the room, contemplating all that passed between them, perchance looking forward to the future, and building castles in the air, like themselves, the secret of each would no longer have been delayed, and all their heart-yearnings told. The supper-room was thrown open, and many repaired thither, Charles and Mary among the rest. Soon the voice of merriment was hushed, and all were attentive listeners, when Sir William Culverton, the brother of our Woking host, proposed the young heir of Murseley's health:

"My dear Eastlake," said he, "we have known each other for many a long day, and I am sure that you will allow me to be spokesman for all the well-wishers to you and yours I see around me: our sincere and heartfelt prayer is for the

future happiness and prosperity of your son, who has this day attained his majority; long may he live; and our warmest and best wishes attend him."

"A thousand thanks," replied Sir Cuthbert, "in the name of my wife and myself," raising his hand towards Lady Eastlake, who was seated a short distance off; "I return you my warmest thanks for the manner in which you have proposed my dear son's health, and can only say, that if, when he has counted as many years as we have, he can number around him as many true and warm-hearted friends as we do at this moment, our most sanguine hopes and wishes will be gratified, and we shall have nothing to wish for, or regret. Again, I thank you all; and may we often and often meet, under the same happy auspices."

A bumper was raised to the lips of each around the table; a tear trembled in the eye of Lady Eastlake, as she returned the good wishes of those immediately around her; and sure am I,

that if a Mrs. Lumley had been in the room,—one with many a sorrow to bear up against, and writhing under a weary load of care,—all would have been for the moment forgotten in the happiness of a fellow-creature; though perhaps deeper the wound, more poignant the sorrow, when the banquet hall is at length deserted, and we are once again alone, the prey of many a bitter thought and unavailing regret.

The ball again commences; Norton makes a petition to his "fair instructress in the Polka," who first taught him "to go the wrong way, and Eliza Mordaunt cheerfully grants his request; in a short space Charles and Mary are again dancing the new Polka, which Colinet had promised to play; away they went merrily round, when, at one of the pauses, a word, a single word was whispered by Charles—that word was "Mary."

> "I write not to that dull elf,
> Who cannot picture to himself,"

that but a single word was wanted to break through

the barrier which divided them, to open wide the gate to the heart of either, and allow free egress to their long-concealed thoughts. A few hurried words were spoken, when once again they commenced dancing. Each felt that other eyes might be upon them, and thus they sought safety in the dizzy round; but that ordeal past, Mary begged her partner to conduct her to her father, who they found seated quietly in the hall, and chatting with Mr. Norton, who had insisted on yielding up his partner to another cavalier, as he said, "more worthy of dancing with the fair Eliza." Both, aye, both; for Mr. Norton, as well as Mr. Aston, had long since marked the early dawn of affection between the young people, and saw at once that something had happened—the secret of their hearts perchance told; so that the former rose immediately, took hold of Charles' arm, and walked slowly away; while Mary at first uttered not a syllable, until, looking up into her father's face, she read encouragement and approval there, and a very

few words sufficed to tell the tale. Another quarter of an hour, and they had bid adieu to the Eastlakes.

Charles was invited to visit Waddesdon on the morrow; and as he handed his betrothed into her carriage, and returned the warm pressure of the hand given by Mr. Aston, and the equally kind "good night" of Mr. Norton, he felt supremely happy. And what were Mary's thoughts, as she laid her head upon her pillow that night? A tear of joy coursed down her fair cheek as she felt that all suspense was over—that she might now begin to allow all her warmest feelings to have place—maidenly shame need no longer forbid her to dwell upon the last words of her now-declared admirer, and future husband. His name, heretofore mentioned in her prayers, but still with a feeling that it was perhaps hardly right so to do; his name, that night, with a sure consciousness of right, had been mingled with that of her father and herself, as she implored a blessing on their future home.

On the morrow, soon after mid-day, Mr. and Mrs. Maberley, and their son, arrived. The good old lady caught Mary in her arms, and while imprinting a kiss on her blushing cheek, declared that she "had nothing left to wish for, that her brightest wishes for her son's happiness were now more than fulfilled."

"Sly dog!" said old Maberley; "but he little thought we had guessed his secret, when we were under this roof last. But God bless you, my boy; we have good cause, indeed, to be proud of our future daughter; and," added he, turning to Mary, "I dare say you both left something or other unsaid, last night; so away with you, and leave us old people to warm ourselves round the fire."

The Maberleys were invited to Waddesdon on the following Tuesday, to stay for a few days. They arrived in good time, so strolled out into the garden; and after luncheon, they all visited the village school, passing, on their way, many a

neat and tidy-looking cottage, where peace and contentment seemed to dwell. Mary, as we already know, found more pleasure in these home occupations, ministering to the wants of all the deserving in her small parish, and enlivening by her presence the sick bed of the humble poor, than the continued round of gaiety and excitement in which she had been a participator, during her London campaign. Not that she did not enjoy society as much as any of her fair companions; but she felt there was a mean in everything—that we were born for better things than trifling away the time, week after week, until at length both the body and mind suffer, in a greater or less degree—can hardly escape scatheless and unhurt. Charles, too, felt how happy he should be to be her coadjutor in all her little acts of charity and kindness—to assist her in all her plans, to the utmost of his power. With such a fair and amiable being by his side, how could his thoughts ever for a moment stray beyond his home?

"'God made the country, man the town,'" whispered he; "do you not feel the truth of that saying, my dearest Mary?"

"Indeed I do, Charles, all our happiest associations are mixed up with our country home—our childhood's early days must always hold the first place in our memory."

"Yes, indeed," said he, "it may be very well, perhaps very natural, for those without kith or kin—any near and dear relations remaining in the world to cheer their lot, to live continually a town life, and seek happiness and enjoyment in a crowd, but such are not our ideas of happiness; and if both of us are spared for yet many a year, our thoughts will ever remain the same, will they not, dearest?" And thus they chatted and dwelt upon the future.

There was no one seated around the dinner-table besides the family party, except Mr. Norton, from whom there were no secrets; he had seen unhappiness the lot of those he loved, and

had suffered somewhat himself; such can fully appreciate another's joy, and delight to witness the youthful heart made glad, much more so than those who have never known a care, or had to mourn a loved one lost. How cheerily they talked of all that had taken place during the last twelve months—it had been a season fraught with events, hereafter to be looked back upon with thankfulness and joy by all of them; the future destiny of the two younger members of the party had been altogether affected by them, and would continue so to be, for the rest of their earthly existence. Their parents would remember, during the evening of their days, even until their latest sun should be sinking low on the horizon, and about to set for ever on the fair scene of this world, while the hand of death was laid heavily upon them, they would call to mind with what joy they had watched the first dawn of affection between the young people; and this small but united circle around the Christmas

hearth, would rise vividly before their fast-closing eyes; perchance, the brightest spot in all the world remembered them. Mr. Norton, too, had as we already know, only returned home last summer, after a long and painful absence from his father-land; *he* would ever hail with joy the year which saw him once again land on his native shore, and grasp the hand of many an early friend.

All shared the same feelings—all were happy in the affection of each other, and contented with themselves.

But hark! the clock of the village church tolls the knell of the parting year! they had been sitting up awaiting that summons to retire, then, as the last note pealed shrilly forth in that calm still night, Mary threw herself into her father's arms, and received his blessing; not a dry eye was there, as the warm and cordial shake of the hand went round, and they wished each other well. Oh, 'twas a scene which, could

we more frequently witness, would cause very many of us to feel, in what true happiness consists;—the affectionate parent, the duteous child, the faithful friend, were all assembled there. Surely, good angels hovered near, and smiled upon the group below them; and ere they took their heavenward way, beheld, with joy unspeakable, each in their chamber lone, bending the knee in thanks and praise to the ruler of the world. Peace and a blessing was on that house; and then, when these guardian spirits spread their wings, and soared high again above the starry sky, and hymned their tidings from the earth, there was joy in heaven.

May our heroine never regret, as we are right sure she never will, the events of the past year.

And now, one word about the fair stranger to whom these pages are dedicated. We many a time have been accepted by her, and very often refused, still, we do not accuse her of caprice,

for one who is sought and wooed by all, must be allowed to distribute her favours, as she thinks best; and who can be seriously angry at an occasionally unintentional slight from so fair and charming a young lady? May she enjoy a long and brilliant reign, and outlive all her subjects.

D. A. DOUDNEY, LONG LANE.